



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION  
500 WEST TEMPLE STREET, ROOM 525  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012-3873  
PHONE: (213) 974-8301 FAX: (213) 626-5427

WENDY L. WATANABE  
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

MARIA M. OMS  
CHIEF DEPUTY

ASST. AUDITOR-CONTROLLERS

ROBERT A. DAVIS  
JOHN NAIMO  
JUDI E. THOMAS

August 20, 2009

TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: Wendy L. Watanabe  
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **FAMILIES UNITING FAMILIES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT  
REVIEW – A DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES  
PROVIDER**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Families Uniting Families Foster Family Agency (Families Uniting Families or Agency), a Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) provider.

**Background**

DCFS contracts with Families Uniting Families, a private non-profit community-based organization to recruit, train and certify foster care parents for the supervision of children DCFS places in foster care. Once the Agency places a child, it is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from the program.

Families Uniting Families is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. The Agency oversees a total of 15 certified foster homes in which 38 DCFS children were placed at the time of our review. Families Uniting Families is located in the Fourth District.

DCFS pays Families Uniting Families a negotiated monthly rate, per child placement, established by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Foster Care Rates Bureau. Based on the child's age, Families Uniting Families receives between \$1,589 and \$1,865 per month, per child. Out of these funds, the Agency pays the foster

parents between \$685 and \$845 per month, per child. DCFS paid Families Uniting Families approximately \$784,000 during Fiscal Year 2008-09.

### **Purpose/Methodology**

The purpose of our review was to determine whether Families Uniting Families was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and the County contract. We reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files and interviewed the Agency's staff. We also visited a number of certified foster homes and interviewed the children and foster parents.

### **Results of Review**

The foster parents indicated that the services they received from Families Uniting Families met their expectations and the children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents. Families Uniting Families also ensured that Needs and Services Plans were in compliance with the County contract and that staff working on the County contract possessed the education and work experience required.

Families Uniting Families needs to ensure that foster homes and case files are maintained in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. We specifically noted the following:

- One (33%) of the three foster homes visited did not adequately secure detergents, cleaning solutions, medications, and dangerous yard tools. Subsequent to our review, the Agency provided documentation that the foster home secured the detergents, cleaning solutions, medications, and dangerous yard tools. Our prior review also noted that Families Uniting Families did not always ensure that foster homes were in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.
- One (33%) of the three foster homes visited was not conducting disaster drills with the children at least every six months.
- Two (33%) of the six foster parent certification files reviewed did not contain documentation that the Agency conducted criminal and child abuse clearances. Prior to the conclusion of our review, the Agency obtained the required criminal and child abuse clearances for the two foster parents.
- The foster parents for two (67%) of the three children taking psychotropic medication were not maintaining daily medication logs.

The details of our review along with recommendations for corrective action are attached.

**Review of Report**

We discussed our report with Families Uniting Families on May 1, 2009. In their response (Attachment I), Families Uniting Families indicates the actions the Agency has taken to implement the recommendations. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review. In their response (Attachment II), DCFS indicates they will follow up on our recommendations during their next monitoring review tentatively scheduled for December 2009.

We thank Families Uniting Families for their cooperation and assistance during this review. Please call me if you have any questions or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (213) 253-0301.

WLW:MMO:JET:DC:AA

Attachments

c: William T Fujioka, Chief Executive Officer  
Patricia S. Ploehn, Director, Department of Children and Family Services  
Ted Myers, Chief Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services  
Susan Kerr, Senior Deputy Director, Department of Children and Family Services  
James Schrage, Board of Directors Chair and Executive Director, Families Uniting  
Families FFA  
Jean Chen, Community Care Licensing  
Public Information Office  
Audit Committee

**FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM  
FAMILIES UNITING FAMILIES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY  
FISCAL YEAR 2008-09**

**BILLED SERVICES**

**Objective**

Determine whether Families Uniting Families Foster Family Agency (Families Uniting Families or Agency) provided program services in accordance with their County contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 regulations.

**Verification**

We visited three of the eight Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Families Uniting Families billed the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in June and July 2008 and interviewed four foster parents and three children placed in the three homes. In addition, we reviewed the case files for six foster parents and five children and we reviewed the Agency's monitoring activity.

**Results**

The foster children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents and the foster parents indicated that the services they received from the Agency met their expectations.

Families Uniting Families needs to ensure that foster homes are in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. The Agency also needs to ensure that criminal and child abuse clearances are conducted for all foster parents and that medication logs are maintained for all children taking psychotropic medication. We specifically noted the following:

**Foster Home Visitation**

- One (33%) of the three foster homes visited did not adequately secure detergents, cleaning solutions, medications, and dangerous yard tools. Subsequent to our review, the Agency provided documentation that the foster home secured the detergents, cleaning solutions, medications, and dangerous yard tools. Our prior review also noted that Families Uniting Families did not always ensure that foster homes were in compliance with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.
- One (33%) of the three foster homes visited was not conducting disaster drills with the children at least every six months.

**Foster Parent Certification**

- Two (33%) of the six foster parent certification files reviewed did not contain documentation that the Agency conducted criminal and child abuse clearances. Prior to the conclusion of our review, the Agency obtained the required criminal and child abuse clearances for the two foster parents.

**Medical Services**

- The foster parents for two (67%) of the three children taking psychotropic medication were not maintaining daily medication logs.

**Recommendations**

**Families Uniting Families management ensure:**

1. **Staff adequately monitor foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.**
2. **Foster parents adequately secure detergents, cleaning solutions, medications, yard tools, and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to children.**
3. **Foster parents conduct and document disaster drills with children at least every six months.**
4. **Criminal and child abuse clearances are conducted for all foster parents.**
5. **Foster parents maintain daily medication logs indicating all the prescription and non-prescription medications administered to children.**

**CLIENT VERIFICATION****Objective**

Determine whether the program participants received the services that Families Uniting Families billed to DCFS.

**Verification**

We interviewed three children placed in three Families Uniting Families certified foster homes and four foster parents to confirm the services the Agency billed to DCFS.

**Results**

The foster children indicated that they enjoyed living with their foster parents and the foster parents indicated that the services they received from the Agency met their expectations. One foster parent was especially grateful for the support and help she received from the Agency for a developmentally delayed child.

**Recommendation**

None.

**STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS****Objective**

Determine whether Families Uniting Families social workers' caseloads do not exceed fifteen placements and whether the supervising social worker does not supervise more than six social workers as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

**Verification**

We interviewed the Agency's administrator and reviewed caseload statistics and payroll records for the Agency's social workers and supervising social worker.

**Results**

Overall, the Agency's three social workers carried an average caseload of 13 cases and the Agency's supervising social worker supervised three social workers.

**Recommendation**

None.

**STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS****Objective**

Determine whether Families Uniting Families staff possess the education and work experience qualifications required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, determine whether the Agency conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training to staff.

**Verification**

We interviewed the Agency's administrator and reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances, and ongoing training.

**Results**

The Agency's administrator, supervising social worker, and social workers possessed the education and work experience required. In addition, the Agency conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training for staff working on the County contract.

**Recommendation**

None.

**PRIOR YEAR FOLLOW-UP****Objective**

Determine the status of the recommendations reported in the Auditor-Controller's prior monitoring review.

**Verification**

We verified whether the outstanding recommendations from the Fiscal Year 2007-08 monitoring review were implemented. The report was issued on December 17, 2007.

**Results**

The prior monitoring report contained four outstanding recommendations. Families Uniting Families implemented three of the recommendations. As indicated earlier, the finding related to recommendation one in this report was also noted in the prior monitoring review.

**Recommendation**

6. Families Uniting Families management implement the outstanding recommendation from the prior monitoring report.



**Board of Directors**

James M. Schrage, MSW, President  
Kevin Sandercock, JD, Vice-President  
Kevin Francis, EA, MBA, Treasurer  
Grace Orpilla, MSW, Secretary  
Jack Nerdal, Board Member

.....  
**Families Uniting Families · 525 E. 7<sup>th</sup> Street · Long Beach · California · 90813**

**May 6, 2009**

**County of Los Angeles  
Department of Auditor-Controller  
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
LA County Board of Supervisors  
500 W. Temple Street, Room 525  
Los Angeles, CA 90012-2706**

**To:** Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

**From:** James M. Schrage, MSW  
Families Uniting Families, Executive Director

**Subject: Response to Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller contract review of Families Uniting Families Foster Family Agency- A DCFS Service Provider**

An audit was conducted of the June 2008 & July 2008 services billed to Los Angeles County and four recommendations were made based on the findings of the Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller.

**Recommendations that Families Uniting Families management should:**

1. Ensure that staff adequately monitors foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and Title 22 regulations.
2. Ensure that foster parents adequately secure detergents, cleaning solutions, medications, yard tools, and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to children.
3. Ensure that foster parents conduct and document disaster drills with children at least every six months.
4. Ensure that criminal and child abuse clearances are conducted for all foster parents.
5. Ensure that foster parents maintain daily medication logs indicating all the prescription and non-prescription medications administered to children.
6. Ensure that Families Uniting Families management implement the outstanding recommendation from the prior monitoring report.

**Families Uniting Families · [www.familiesunitingfamilies.org](http://www.familiesunitingfamilies.org) · 562-437-4114**

A 501-(c)(3) non-for profit corporation

*"We are inextricably linked together in a single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality."*  
**Dr. Martin Luther King**





.....  
**Families United Families · 525 E. 7<sup>th</sup> Street · Long Beach · California · 90813**

Ms. Cassandra Youngblood, Auditor, met with Families United Families (FUF) James Schrage (Executive Director) to discuss the findings of the program review. An exit interview document was also prepared by the offices of the Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller and presented to FUF management.

The details for the preparation of the agency's response to the findings will provide any corrective actions that would be required to ensure compliance with the County contract and state regulations. Listed below are the items in need of redress.

**In response to recommendation #1**, "that FUF will ensure that staff will adequately monitor foster homes to ensure they comply with the County contract and Title 22 regulations" **and to recommendation #2**, "that FUF will ensure that foster parents adequately secure detergents, cleaning solutions, medications, yard tools, and other items that could pose a potential safety hazard to children and during each home inspection our representative will specifically review detergent, medication, and knives". **And, recommendation #3**, "that FUF will ensure that foster parents conduct and document disaster drills with children at least every six months".

- A formal facility check will be made every three months to ensure that each certified home facility is in compliance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations. Likewise, as the Foster Care Social Workers make regular contact with the facility during their home visits, they will examine the home between formal facility checks and provide directives to certified parents if the facility fails below an acceptable standard of care. FUF will also be completing and documenting disaster drills with children at least every six months.

**In response to recommendation #4**, "that FUF will ensure that criminal and child abuse clearances are conducted for all foster parents".

- Agency will utilize an internal audit form that tracks criminal and child abuse clearances. This document will be reviewed before the any home achieves certification.

**In response to recommendation #5**, "that FUF will ensure that foster parents maintain daily medication logs indicating all the prescription and non-prescription medications administered to children".

- Agency will utilize a medication tracking form to ensure that prescription and non-prescription medication is tracked on a daily basis.

**In response to recommendation #6**, "that FUF our management will implement the outstanding recommendation from the prior monitoring report.

- o Please refer to recommendations 1 & 2

Respectfully submitted,

  
**James M. Schrage, MSW**  
Executive Director

Families United Families · [www.familiesunitedfamilies.org](http://www.familiesunitedfamilies.org) · 562-437-4114

A 501-(c) (3) non-for profit corporation

*"We are inextricably linked together in a single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality."*  
**Dr. Martin Luther King**



PATRICIA S. PLOEHN, LCSW  
Director

**County of Los Angeles  
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

425 S. Shatto Place, Los Angeles, California 90020  
(213) 351-5602

July 16, 2009

TO: Aggie Alonso, Chief Accountant-Auditor  
Countywide Contract Monitoring Division

FROM: Elizabeth A. Howard, Section Head  
Out of Home Care Management Division  
Foster Family Agency/Group Home Performance Management

Board of Supervisors  
GLORIA MOLINA  
First District  
MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS  
Second District  
ZEV YAROSLAVSKY  
Third District  
DON KNABE  
Fourth District  
MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH  
Fifth District

**DCFS RESPONSE TO THE AUDITOR CONTROLLER'S CONTRACT REVIEW OF  
FAMILIES UNITING FAMILIES FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY**

The Out of Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) has reviewed the Auditor-Controller's (A-C) July 14, 2009 final draft report of the contract compliance review of Families Uniting Families FFA. Although, the report notes several programmatic issues, there were no safety issues which required an immediate response from DCFS.

We will conduct a follow-up review based on the A-C's recommendations, which is tentatively scheduled for December 2009.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (626) 569-6804.

MG:EAH:NF

C: Wendy L. Watanabe, Auditor-Controller  
Patricia Ploehn, Director, DCFS  
Lisa Parrish, Deputy Director, DCFS  
Marilynne Garrison, Division Chief, DCFS